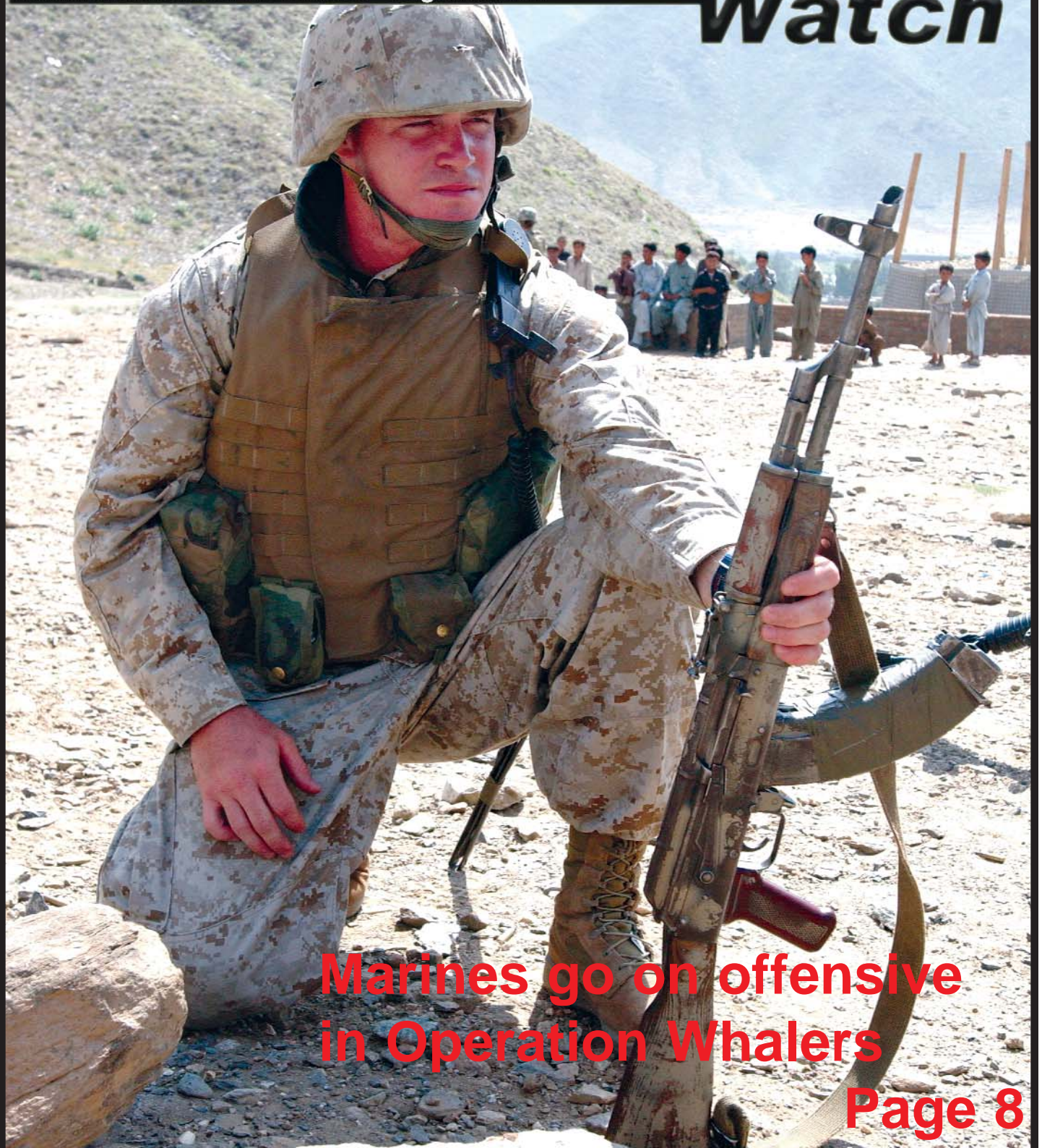


Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

September 12, 2005



**Marines go on offensive
in Operation Whalers**

Page 8



Commanders of the Korean 8th Dong-Ui Unit, Task Force Strength and the Egyptian hospital, cut the ribbon at the reopening of the Korean Hospital Aug. 29. After the ceremony, the medical staff opened the doors to treat Afghan residents and Coalition forces.

Photo by Korean army Capt.
Jong-Hyun Kim
Korean Support Group Public Affairs

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Cover: Marine Sgt. William McKuen, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines Regiment, prepares to depart for Operation Whalers.

Photo by Army Spc. Jason Krawczyk
20th Public Affairs Detachment

Afghanistan **Freedom** Watch

Freedom Watch is the weekly publication of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan.

CFC-A Commander - Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry
Public Affairs Officer - Col. James R. Yonts

Freedom Watch, an Army publication, is published each Monday by the 20th Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Printed circulation is 6,000 copies per week.

In accordance with AR-360-1, this Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas.

Contents of the *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

Deadline for submissions is 0730 Zulu each Friday. All submissions are subject to editing by the 20th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Bldg. 425, Room 107, Bagram Airfield. We can be reached at DSN 318-231-3338.

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The halfway point

By Army Sgt. James-Denton Wyllie
20th Public Affairs Detachment

Six months.

I am six months into my deployment to Afghanistan, with six months left to go.

I'm at what is known as the "halfway point."

As each of us reaches our own halfway point, I think that it's only right that we take time to look back and reflect.

How are we different from when we first arrived?

Hopefully, we are more knowledgeable of our mission and our environment.

If we are lucky, we will have been able to see the impact that our hard work has had in one way or another.

We will be able to feel good about what we are doing, and look forward to the final half of our deployment.

However, does that address the changes each of us has made not just as service members but as people? Have we changed as people? Has our outlook changed at all? I like to think it has for all of us.

When I first stepped off the plane at Bagram Airfield, all I wanted to do was turn right around, get back on the plane, and fly back to the states. I really wasn't interested in the people, culture, history or environment.

All I wanted to do was get the mission over with and go home. Something tells me I was not alone in feeling this way initially about my deployment.

Now, I find myself interested in all of these things despite myself. I believe that for most of us who work hard and keep an open mind it is very difficult to avoid getting drawn in.

It becomes hard to see little girls go to school for the first

time in their lives and not care about what you are doing. It becomes impossible to see an entire country step forward on the path toward freedom and not change within oneself.

To be fair, changes can go both ways. There are those of us who will change for the worse.

There are some whose resentment will cloud any opportunity to see things in a positive light. Nonetheless, I believe that the majority of us have and will continue to change for the better.

Taken out of our familiar surroundings, I trust that most of us will expand our view of the world around us. I expect that contact with people from a very different culture will lead many of us to re-evaluate ourselves and our culture. I believe hiking up mountains or walking down streets in full battle-rattle with weapon in hand will help us appreciate the mountains and streets we left behind.

Most of all, I hope and believe that helping in this great enterprise will make each and every one of us understand why it is important to help one another as human beings.

As Americans, we are members of one of the most powerful, progressive nations in the world. While we shouldn't feel guilty about that, we should realize not all people enjoy the benefits we do.

Understanding the lessons our deployment have taught us so far, we can work to change this sad fact.

As Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines, we are in a unique position. By changing ourselves, we can change the world around us as well.

All we have to do is take a minute and think about it.

Luckily, we still have some time left.

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Actor and comedian Drew Carey poses for a picture with members of D Battery, 3rd Battalion, 19th Field Artillery.

"I'm fat and rich. What better do I have to do?" said Carey when asked why he came to Afghanistan.

Photo by Army Spc. Jason Krawczyk
20th Public Affairs Detachment

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil.

Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



SMA speaks out on transformation

By Army Spc. Jeremy Crisp

Multi-National Corps -- Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Sergeant Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston observed some of the new equipment Soldiers are using in Iraq and spoke to service members throughout the country recently about the Army's restructuring.

During his three-day tour which began Aug. 27, Preston was given the opportunity to do what he likes to do best -- speak with the Soldiers.

"These Soldiers are out here doing real-world missions," Preston said. "You walk out to a traffic control point and it's hot, it's dusty and there is a lot of traffic. It's important for me to know at that particular moment in time what the Soldiers are thinking ... so senior leaders can really make a difference and improve on where the Army is and identify where we need to go with all of our policies and procedures."

A crowd of several hundred service members gathered at the Morale Welfare and Recreation Theater at Logistics Support Area Anaconda in order to hear Preston thank troops and civilians for their hard work and dedication, while speaking to crowds about restructuring of the Army and to voice concerns of their own.

"It's one thing to read about what Soldiers are doing here, but it's completely different to sit down and talk with them face-to-face," Preston said.

"It's nice to see somebody like that around," said Sgt. Kelly A. Hayes, a chemical operations noncommissioned officer with Company D, 50th Signal Battalion, Fort Bragg, N.C. "It's good to have a person in such a high position showing he cares."

Although the restructuring of the Army and its switch to self-sustaining brigade combat teams was something Hayes knew about when she joined the Army, Preston was able to enlighten her on the details during his visit.

"I pretty much knew where the Army was going with its transformation, but not as much as he described," said Hayes, who hails from Atlanta. "I learned about the life cycles, how Soldiers aren't only going to be with the unit for three years, but the chain-of-command and the whole unit will be there for three years as well. It was nice to hear it from the horse's mouth."

Restructuring of the Army was the focus of Preston's speech, touching on how the Army and its Soldiers have to have "the right tools in the toolbox" in order to fight the War on Terror.

During the Cold War, "The Army's mis-

sion could be related to that of a carpenter being dropped off in the woods, and being asked to only build log cabins," Preston said to the troops. "What tools would you need? A chainsaw, an axe?" "Fast-forward to the present-day mission," he said. "Have that same carpenter dropped off in the woods and not only have him build log cabins, but Stratavarius violins, and everything in between. What kind of tools would you need then? That is what we are faced with."

Upon conclusion of the speech, Preston went to an area hospital to visit with injured troops, and wrapped up his tour with a look at rest and relaxation operations at the Baghdad flight line.

"The No. 1 issue that troops come to me with is they are concerned about the future," Preston said. "They want to know how much time they will have at home between deployments and what the Army is doing to take pressure off of those units that are deploying on their second rotations."

"That's why it is important for all Soldiers to understand the transformation," he said. "So they can see what the senior army leadership is doing to transform the Army and really take the pressure off units doing back-to-back deployments."

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



Afghan cultural tidbit

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week:

What time is it?

Are you hungry?

Aya shume gursna hasted?

(Eye-yah shoo-mah goor-ees-nah hah-stayed)

Pashtu

Taso wazha ye?

(Tah-soh wah-ja yaya)

Afghan men typically wear a long tunic over baggy trousers and often wear a vest over the tunic. Turbans are wound around a type of turban cap. Pashtuns and others who imitate them leave a couple of feet of turban cloth hanging down, while most of those in the rest of the country tuck the end in. Pashtun men customarily have their hair cut square at ear-lobe length. Other groups have their heads shaved about twice a month.

New school opens in Kandahar

By Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco
20th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR CITY, Afghanistan - Children in Kandahar City were given a place to learn and grow when the Mahmood Hotak School was dedicated in an Aug 28 ceremony.

Under reconstruction since Jan. 15, the 12,000 square-foot facility includes 16 classrooms, two staff rooms, an administrative office, six latrines, a deep well with pump, blackboards, and desks and chairs for students and teachers.

The project was a joint effort between the Kandahar Regional Development Zone, the Afghan Consultant and Development Group and the Afghanistan Ministry of National Education.

On hand to cut the ribbons were Kandahar Province Governor, Asadullah Khalid;

director of education, Hayatullah Rafiqi; Task Force Gun Devil Commander, Army Lt. Col. Bertrand Ges; Commander of the Kandahar RDZ, Navy Cmdr. Stephanie Jones; the director of Women's Affairs; and Ministry of Interior representative, Afghan Col. Mohammad Hussien Andiwal.

The dedication ceremony began after a local imam (chaplain) recited a few verses of the Koran. Rafiqi, Jones and Andiwal gave speeches after the ribbon cutting.

"A great man once said, 'A man may have all the talent in the world, but without the ambition to better himself, he will not accomplish a thing,'" said Jones. "The people of Afghanistan need not worry, for there is no shortage of ambition here."

Jones thanked the ACDG,



Photo by Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco

The newly opened Mahmood High School in Kandahar.

the governor and his staff, and Rafiqi for their support in the project.

Andiwal expressed deep appreciation for Coalition forces, stressing the importance of education and how his country "would turn back to dirt" without it.

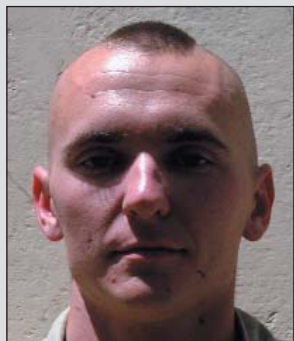
The ceremony was concluded with Jones and Rafiqi signing the necessary paperwork to turn the school over to the Ministry of National Education.

Jones presented a certificate of appreciation from the RDZ to Asadullah Mutawakil of the Afghan Consultant and Development Group, and a case containing all the keys to the facility to Haji Abdul Rashid, the school principal.

"It's much more for me, truly an honor," said Mutawakil when he accepted the certificate. "I would like to thank Cmdr. Jones and the Coalition forces for their very tremendous support for my country."

Enduring Voices

What leadership quality most helps you accomplish your job?



Army Staff Sgt. Michael Dean
Company A, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment

"Confidence in my job. Sergeants have to know their job in order to train their Soldiers."



Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Samuel Kofoed
Company C, 158th Aviation Regiment

"Discipline because it helps to take care of all the little aspects of my job."



Air Force Staff Sgt. Ezekiel Rodriguez
Detachment 1, 4th Air Support Operations Group

"Being quick and decisive in my job helps to save lives."



Army Spc. Cicely Garcia
111th Area Support Group

"I have initiative in completing my duties which shows my sergeants that I am reliable in completing my task."



Photos by Air Force Airman 1st Class Desiree L. Hayden

Air Force Master Sgt. Scott Drayna, a flight engineer with the 41st Expeditionary Electronic Combat Squadron, performs a check on an aircraft prior to a tactical command, control and communications countermeasures mission.

Compass blocks enemy

By Air Force Staff
Sgt. Shanda De Anda
379th Air Expeditionary
Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - With support from the 41st Expeditionary Electronic Combat Squadron - Compass Call, Coalition forces can feel more comfortable that the enemy is being limited in their ability to communicate

The EC-130 Hercules Compass Call is an airborne tactical system that prevents successful enemy command and control communications and limits adversary coordination essential for enemy combatant management.

The system supports tactical air operation and provides conventional and special operations support to friendly forces.

The combination of these capabilities makes the Compass Call aircraft and crew an asset whose demand lies outside of the Air Expeditionary Force system.

"As a low density, high demand asset, we are tasked to support the regional combatant commands and any and all AEFs" said Air Force Lt. Col. Chuck Schnarr, 41st EECS commander.

To help meet the demands for the tactical system, more deployments for Airmen supporting this mission are required.

Despite extended stays, austere conditions and a high operational tempo, Airmen remain focused and dedicated to the mission, Schnarr said.

"We're here to do a job and our time here is not some-

thing we really think about, we just do it," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Cantu, 41st EECS electrical and environmental technician. He reaches 300 days deployed in the area of responsibility Sept. 20.

"Being separated from family is difficult, but my job over here saving lives is something my family understands and supports," he said.

The Air Force has two Compass Call units, both based at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., but aligned under the 55th Electronic Combat Group, 55th Wing at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. The 41st Electronic Combat Squadron, which becomes the 41st EECS when deployed, supports Operation Enduring Freedom missions while it's sister unit, the 43rd ECS, supports Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We are the meat and potatoes supporting OEF and we are closer to the fight being here (the unit recently relocated from Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, Uzbekistan)," said Air Force Master Sgt. James Scott, 41st EECS deployed first sergeant and acquisition operator when flying. "It's good to know that we are helping to take care of and provide a certain protection to convoys and ground troops."

To provide this protection, maintainers and support staff are crucial.

"The 41st flies the EC-130H Compass Call aircraft and its mission is to jam unfriendly communications, making it difficult for an enemy to command and control its forces," said Air Force Chief Master



Air Force Staff Sgt. Brian Stanford, 41st Expeditionary Electronic Combat Squadron crew chief, opens the back ramp of an EC-130 Hercules aircraft.

Sgt. John Calloway, 41st EECS superintendent.

To make these missions a reality, "the 41st relies on the teams deployed here from the 755th Operations Support Squadron, the 755th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and the 355th Wing maintenance augmentees (all units from D-MAFB)," said Schnarr. "This is the longest Compass Call has ever been deployed in its 25-year history, and I am extremely proud of this team effort; they have exceeded expectations with a remarkable record of performance."

A silent protector, Compass Call missions are often accomplished without the beneficiaries of their protection ever knowing the sortie is being flown.

"Many of our Airmen have deployed well over the AEF 120 days in a 20-month period standard, but this has not undermined the effort or lessened the enthusiasm of our great operations and maintenance team," Schnarr said. "We understand the importance of our mission supporting the ground forces in OEF and the lives we protect."

Based on their continued mission successes, after 500 days, and counting, the Compass Call team remains focused and a valuable asset to winning the war on terrorism, Schnarr said.

The 41st EECS exceeded 500 days of continuous responsibility in support of Operation Enduring Freedom Aug. 7.



Marine Cpl. Thomas Owen pulls security in the shade during Operation Whalers.



Marine Lance Cpl. Justin Overturf moves across a bridge on his way to help out a group of ambushed Marines.



Marines hike up a mountain face in Konar Province during Operation Whalers.



Marine Cpl. Edilberto Fernandez directs fire for his fellow Marines while

Mission accomplished for Ma

By Army Spc. Jason Krawczyk
20th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP WRIGHT, Afghanistan - Operation Whalers, an offensive operation involving all U.S. military services, the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and Afghan special forces, had a significant effect and met tangible goals in the Konar Province.

"Since the operation, Konar and surrounding provinces have stepped up and begun to take their future into their own hands," said Army Lt. Col. Patrick Munster, Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team commander. "They are weeding out the people keeping their province from being a peaceful one and taking the initiative to start building roads and schools on their own. This is a major step in the right direction for one of the most dangerous places in Afghanistan."

Marines moved into place to set up resupply points, radio transmitting points and mortar positions Aug 10. Then Marines and Sailors from 2nd

Battalion, 3rd Marines, A logical operations and Air controllers moved into the districts of Chawkey, Asadabad in the Konar Province to

"Whalers was designed to force them to fight off the upcoming elections said John McShane, E Company, 3rd Marine Regt.

The next day, U.S. and Afghan forces moved into place to surround the biggest challenges was providing food to the service members. They accomplished this three days later.

Marines carried the food to the service members. Harsh conditions led to a local transportation of donkeys to haul supplies. The donkeys dropped, said McShane.

The U.S. and Afghan forces moved into place to set up resupply points, radio transmitting points and mortar positions Aug 10. Then Marines and Sailors from 2nd



Marine Lance Cpl. Christopher Tackett, pulls security during Operation Whalers.



Photos by Army Spc. Jason Krawczyk

being ambushed in Konar Province during Operation Whalers.

Marines in Operation Whalers

Army civil affairs, psycho-
r Force joint tactical air
the mountains around the
adabad, Pech and Narang
hunt down the enemy.
to encircle the enemy
or surrender and make
safe," said Marine Capt.
any commander 2nd Bn.,

Afghan service members
ound the enemy. "One of
s moving water and
bers," said McShane. "We
different ways."

and water to other
terrain led the Marines
alternative -- they used
Supplies were also air

forces secured local vil-
safe haven and forcing

them to the mountains.

"The villages we searched were filled with women and children. They were left to tend the animals and farms, all the males of fighting age had fled," said Marine Cpl. Edilberto Fernandez, a squad leader with 2nd Bn, 3rd Marines.

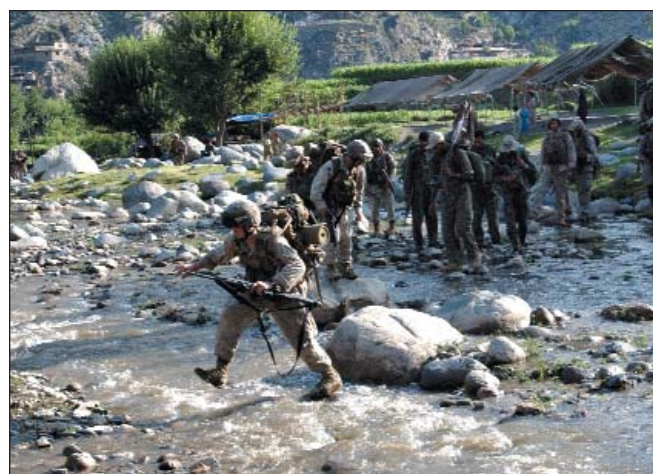
As the offensive began to close in, the enemy engaged F Co. an estimated 22 enemy were killed in this first engagement.

By the fifth day of the operation, ambushes and fire fights were happening all the time; With nowhere to go, the enemy faced with two options - fight or surrender, said McShane.

"As the operation came to a close, it was clear to all involved that it had been a complete success. There had been 29 separate engagements against the enemy resulting in an estimated 40 enemy deaths and the ones left were left with the knowledge that not only U.S. forces want them gone, but the people of Afghanistan do too," said McShane.

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Marine Lance Cpl. Leopbdo Gutierrez stops for a rest as his squad moves up a valley in Konar Province.



A Marine leads the way in crossing a river during Operation Whalers.



Photo by Army Pfc. Mike Pryor

Army 2nd Lt. K.D. Castro, a platoon leader with B Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, reclines on a cushion while taking part in a meeting with village elders in Wardak Province.

Paratroopers bond with elders

By Army Pfc. Mike Pryor
Task Force Red Falcon Public Affairs

WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan - If the old men sitting cross-legged on the rug sipping tea had been old men sitting on stools drinking beer, you could easily imagine you were at a Veterans of Foreign Wars post somewhere in Middle America, instead of a dusty tent in an isolated region of Afghanistan.

Old Soldiers, it turns out, have the same conversations all over the world.

Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division found that out when they met with a group of village elders and former Mujahadeen fighters to discuss security in Wardak Province.

The meeting was held at the request of Army 2nd Lt. K.D. Castro, whose platoon of 1st

Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment paratroopers is responsible for security in the area. After several recent rocket attacks on his nearby base, Castro felt it was time to meet with local elders and gauge how much support Coalition forces had in the region.

To arrange the meeting, Castro went to see Afghan Col. Rajab Khaw, the police chief in the district. A big, bear-like man, Khaw sat behind a simple desk adorned only with a framed photo of himself in his uniform. After Castro arrived, the two men made small talk through an interpreter for a few minutes. Then Castro asked where his platoon could find enemy forces to fight.

"Why do you want to fight? (Afghans) have been fighting

too long," Khaw said.

Castro replied that he didn't want to fight, but that fighting was necessary to bring peace and security. He did it because he had to, not because he wanted to, he said.

"Sometimes I don't like this job. I wish I was home with my family," Castro said.

Khan laughed a sad kind of laugh. He then explained that he had been a Mujahadeen fighter for 25 years, and he missed his family that whole time.

All Soldiers do, he said.

"But that's the sacrifice we make for a better future for our kids and families," replied Castro.

"Yes, it's just like that," agreed the Colonel.

The two men seemed to come to an understanding then, and the Colonel agreed

to help Castro arrange the meeting. He told him to return to the police station the next morning.

When Castro and his company commander, Army Capt. Jeffrey Burgoyne, arrived the next day, approximately 15 elders and the District Governor were waiting. They removed their shoes and crowded into a tent with an intricate rug laid on the floor. The men sat on cushions or reclined on mattresses as nuts, sweets, and tea were brought out. This was the conference room.

The elders were mostly all frail-looking old men with wispy, white beards, and wrinkled, brown faces. But for years these men had seen foreign armies come and go. Sometimes they had fought

See ELDERS, Page 13

New radio increases effectiveness

By Army Pfc. Mike Pryor

Task Force Red Falcon Public Affairs

WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan

- "Delta Six Romeo, Delta Six Romeo, this is Red Four Three Sierra. Radio check, over," Army Spc. Shawn Sinclair said into his transmitter. Several tense seconds passed as he waited for a response.

Then, faintly but clearly, came the voice at the other end of the receiver: "Red Four Three Sierra, this is Delta Six Romeo. I hear you loud and clear, over."

It may not seem like much, but this simple conversation represented the culmination of almost a month of hard work by paratroopers from the communications shop of the 82nd Airborne Division's 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment.

On Aug. 21, the first successful transmission between battalion headquarters and Company D -- stationed more than 160 kilometers away at Forward Operating Base South -- was completed using the newly operational AN/PRC - 150 High Frequency Radio.

The decision to use high frequency was made out of necessity, rather than choice. After arriving in Afghanistan in mid-July, the Red Falcons of 1st Battalion learned quickly that the mountainous terrain, primitive infrastructure, and vast distances between bases in the country make communication difficult. Inside the operations center at battalion headquarters, it was a daily struggle to maintain contact with troopers conducting missions outside the wire -- especially those assigned to D Co.

None of the battalion's communication equipment was up to the task of sustaining constant radio contact over long distances, said Sinclair, a signal support specialist in the commo shop.

FM radios don't reach far enough, "there's too much traffic on the (tactical satellite net), and there are no phone lines down to FOB South," Sinclair explained.

In order to remain in contact, the commo shop was forced to turn to a different form of technology -- high frequency radio, he said.



Photo by Army Pfc. Mike Pryor

Army Sgt. Jeovannie Melendez (right) and Staff Sgt. Sean Long of the Red Falcon Commo shop, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, make repairs to a satellite dish on the roof of Forward Operating Base Red Falcon North in Wardak, Afghanistan, Aug. 22.

"Nobody in the theater is using high frequency right now. They're only using TacSat," he said.

When it became obvious how valuable having high frequency radio could be, Battalion Commander Army Lt. Col. David Anders made setting up a high frequency connection a top priority. The commo shop worked every day to make it happen, but kept running into one problem after another, Long said.

Part of the problem was due to the way high frequency radio works, said Army Sgt. Jeovannie Melendez. High frequency operates by bouncing its signal through the atmosphere. Depending on the time of day and the distance of the transmission, it may have bounce through as many as five layers of atmosphere, he said.

As a result, the success of the transmission depends on the time of day and the angle of the antenna. Controlling all those factors was a struggle.

But the commo shop overcame all those obstacles when they made their first successful transmission on Aug. 21.

"What the colonel wanted was to be able to get on the radio and talk to D Company without having to use the TacSat. Now he can do that," Sinclair said.

But there's no rest for the weary. The very next day the commo shop began

work on its next big project -- getting cable TV hooked up for football season.

WHALERS From, Page 9

After the offensive, the operation transformed into a civic assistance operation.

"In less than five hours, over 600 Afghans were helped. We treated everything from fevers to severe burns. It was not only Navy corpsman and Army medics, but local doctors also stepped in and offered their expertise," said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Tobias Meister, the officer in charge of Civil Affairs Team A in the Konar Province. "The (Medical Civil Affairs Project) was a way for the U.S. forces and Afghan forces to show the people that we are here for them and in the future hope to return and conduct more Civil Affairs operations," he added.

Operation Whalers showed the enemy that the people of Afghanistan want peace, said Munster.

"The ANA, ANP and ASF worked seamlessly together and the locals in the area were very forthcoming with information," said Munster. "The people of Afghanistan are tired of war and want peace."

Each service played a unique role in helping to fulfill the security brought to this remote area, said McShane.

Training ignites first Afghan Army demining operation

By Army Capt. Cenethea Harraway

Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan Public Affairs

KABUL , Afghanistan - The Afghan National Army recently put their training to use as they successfully conducted the first ANA-led demining operation in Afghanistan. The mission highlighted not only the expanding military capabilities of the ANA, but the government's commitment to achieve a mine-free Afghanistan for future generations.

With the approval of the Afghan Ministry of Defense, the ANA leadership took charge and organized two days of real-world demining operations at the Area Military Depot of Pol-e Charkhi. Halo Trust, a British-based non-governmental organization dedicated to humanitarian mine clearing, identified the area as containing mines.

"Getting the soldiers to work in a real minefield immediately after training was essential to instill the courage and confidence needed to do their job," said French army Capt. Thierry Sagon, the primary instructor for demining training.

The demining operation consisted of three main areas: the entry control point, the demining zone and the company area of operations.

At the entry control point, each two-man demining buddy team received a safety briefing and protective gear. They were also listed on an accountability roster by name and blood type.

Each buddy team was comprised of a first-degree and a second-degree deminer. A first-degree rating qualifies deminers to search for mines and provide initial detection. Second-degree deminers, who are also rated as instructors are qualified to identify and determine which neutralization method is best for disabling each mine or munition. The ANA company leadership provided the overall command and control for the operation.

Safety was emphasized over speed, with the operation occurring in a secured environment under daylight conditions. A medical evacuation team was on site as well.

In the demining zone, three two-man buddy teams took positions 50 meters apart and worked in corridors 80 centimeters wide. Since manual demining can be tedious, repetitive and dangerous, the teams were rotated every 20 minutes as a safety precaution.

During the second day of the operation, the Afghan demining teams discovered an improvised explosive device and a Soviet anti-personnel mine.

Applying their knowledge and training, the deminers quickly assessed the situation and determined that the IED could be safely detonated in place. They marked the anti-personnel mine's location and left it in place for later destruction.

The Afghan demining teams cheered and applauded their first live detonation. Yet their confidence and elation did not distract them from the gravity of their work.

Only two months prior, 90 members of the engineer company from the 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps' 4th Combat Support Kandak

Photos by Air Force Staff Sgt. Victoria Meyer Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan



An ANA first-degree deminer from the 4th Combat Support Kandak (Battalion) Engineer Company inspects a mine-detecting sensor used to locate buried landmines.



Above: Dust settles after Afghan National Army demining teams destroy an improvised explosive device. The IED was found during operations at the Pol-e Charkhi area depot.

"Getting the soldiers to work in a real minefield immediately after training was essential to instill the courage and confidence needed to do their job,"

-- French army Capt. Thierry Sagon
Primary instructor for demining training

(Battalion) completed advanced demining training and earned their first and second-degree ratings.

Members of the French army's Engineer Mobile Training Team conducted the training as part of Operation Epidote, the name France has given to its entire training mission in Afghanistan.

"It was very necessary for the Afghan Army to be involved today and to show that they can learn and execute technical skills," said French army Lt. Col. Gaetan Sevin, chief of the French training team. "We do not alter our standards of training. The Afghan soldiers are trained just as we are in France. We are very pleased with the outcome and have much confidence in the abilities of the soldiers."

The 4th Kandak's Engineer Company was the first ANA unit to complete the comprehensive two-month demining training. According to the French instructors, they trained in realistic, difficult situations to master the drills and procedures needed to work in a live minefield.

The training focused on mine identification, detection, clearance, neutralization and removal methods. The students learned to identify 60 types of munitions and 35 different mines.

"I am very happy our soldiers were able to get professional demining training," said Afghan Lt. Col. Aminjan, commander of the 4th Kandak. "Last year, our unit deployed to the Ghazni province and could do nothing when we faced real minefields and explosive materials. Thanks to the French trainers and Coalition forces, we now have the skills and moral courage to locate and neutralize the mines to help protect our people."

The French instructors lead the way in ANA demining training with support and donations from Coalition forces and other non-governmental organizations such as the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan. Despite progress made by mine action organizations, Afghanistan still remains heavily contaminated by mines and other explosive remnants from years of war. These mines continue to have a devastating effect on the Afghan people and impede economic development.

"Today was not about just finding mines or munitions, but rather their ability to apply their knowledge and skills in a real-world environment," Sagon said. "They organized and executed the operation in entirety. They did a great job."

The demining mission marked a huge step and a new direction in operational abilities for the ANA.

"The training and today's demining operation will help us in our military duties," said Afghan Capt. Shenwari Hanifullah, the ANA engineer company commander. "More importantly, it will help us to protect the people of Afghanistan."



An Afghan National Army first-degree deminer carefully searches for mines using an entrenching tool. Each demining buddy team worked in a corridor 80 centimeters wide.

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against them, sometimes for them, and sometimes against each other. But always they had fought. Now they were being asked to help end the fighting.

Burgoyne was the first to speak. He told the group that he didn't have money or supplies to give them. He said that he was there as a Soldier sent to hunt down the enemy.

"I am asking you for help," he said.

The elders were unsure, however. They were happy to work with Coalition forces to build wells and schools, but hunting down insurgents was another matter. After all, they had been rebels once. Were they now supposed to turn in their friends and relatives in the Taliban to the police? Young men who had picked up rifles to fight against foreign armies just as they all had years ago? Why should they do this for the Americans in strange uniforms sitting before them? But then, one of the men spoke up angrily.

"Your governor is Mujahadeen. Your chief of police fought Jihad for 25 years. All the government is Muslim and Mujahadeen," he told the group, "Islam is not in danger here. Why do you shoot rockets at these people?"

The old soldiers murmured their agreement. They pledged their support for the government. Then Burgoyne spoke up to show the elders that the Coalition was on their side.

"We respect your religion. We respect your women. We respect your culture. And we respect your elders. That is why we are asking for your cooperation. Help us so we don't make a mistake and arrest the wrong people," he said.

There was a pause, then one of the leaders of the group looked straight at the captain.

"You are different than the Russians. We will help you," he said.

That was the end of the meeting. The Americans soon drove off in their vehicles, headed for other meetings and other missions. But some of the elders remained in the tent, telling each other old war stories from the days when they had been soldiers.

Commission wraps up BRAC decisions

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN)

— The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission wrapped up four days of deliberations in final actions Aug. 26 and 27 by voting to turn Pope Air Force Base, N.C., into an Army airfield and recommending sweeping recommendations to revamp the Air National Guard and consolidate its operations.

The nine-person commission deviated significantly from the Pentagon's proposed plan to realign the Air Guard, passing a recommendation that would ensure states with an existing Air Guard unit would retain at least some Guard aircraft.

The decisions, made over the course of four days in Arlington, Va., will be reflected in a final report to be sent to President Bush. If he concurs,

the president will send the final list to Congress, which can accept or reject it in its entirety, but not change it.

The votes follow months of hearings nationwide regarding DOD's proposal to reshape the military infrastructure and eliminate excess capacity by closing 33 major bases and realigning 29 others.

Defense officials had estimated the plan would save about \$49 billion over the next 20 years, although that figure is expected to alter dramatically based on the BRAC decisions.

In major actions since Aug. 24, the BRAC commission voted to close these Air Force installations:

■Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, consolidating medical operations for the region at a new San Antonio Regional Medical Center at nearby Fort Sam Houston.

■Brooks City-Base, Texas.

■Onizuka Air Force Station, Calif.

■Galena Airport Forward Operation Location, Alaska.

The panel voted to keep open the following Air Force installations and schools:

■Ellsworth AFB, S.D.

■Cannon AFB, N.M., until at least 2009, and urged DOD to find a new mission for the base, if possible;

■Defense Language Institute, Monterey, Calif.

■Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, establishing a governing board to coordinate education programs between the school and the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

Other votes the panel made affecting the Air Force are:

■Consolidate operations at Fort Dix, McGuire AFB and Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst in New Jersey, creating a single joint base under a central commander at

McGuire.

■Consolidate 26 Defense Finance and Accounting Service offices into five: in Cleveland; Limestone, Maine, at the former Loring AFB; Rome, N.Y., at the former Griffiss AFB; at the Defense Supply Center-Columbus, Ohio; the Bean Federal Center in Indianapolis at the former Fort Benjamin Harrison; and in Alexandria, Va.

■Move the dental training school at Sheppard AFB, Kan., to Fort Sam Houston as part of a new consolidated medical center.

■Realign Randolph AFB, Texas, by moving its undergraduate navigator training to Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla.

■Block the move of active-component combat aircraft from Eielson AFB, Alaska.

■Stop the move of about 1,000 jobs to Hanscom AFB, Mass.

CNO states that Sea Power is a force for good

From Chief of Naval Operations PAO

ARLINGTON, Va. - Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Mullen defined his vision of sea power as a "force for good" while speaking at the Worldwide Commandants' Conference Aug. 23 in Arlington, Va.

"Sea power [should also be used] as way to understand, as a way to deliver hope, and empower where there is the will and desire to be empowered," he told the commandants and chiefs of navies from 26 countries assembled at the conference.

The conference, hosted by Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Mike Hagee, was designed to stimulate discussion about future cooperation, humanitarian missions, the role of maritime nations in the global war on terror and the continuing relevance of strong sea power.

Mullen said teamwork was the first real

requirement of sea power, and he pointed to the Navy's close relationship with the Marine Corps as proof.

"When I talk about partnerships, my first partner is (Gen.) Mike Hagee," he added. "The synergy that we bring to the expeditionary nature of our business has been proven throughout history."

"I believe this really is the essence of sea power," Mullen said.

Equally important to teamwork is the ability to constantly change to meet new operational requirements and threats, something Mullen noted the sea services were particularly well-suited to do.

"There's a lot of talent in our Navy. We are deep with talent and it's important for us to look for ways to relieve some of the stress on the force," Mullen said. "Essentially, where I would like the United States Navy to go, and in a complimentary way with the United States Marine Corps,

is in the maritime domain wherever the requirement exists. That's an area we should have some expertise."

Mullen noted there are nearly 4,000 U.S. Sailors on the ground in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait and that the service may soon be replacing Army units in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as well as assuming command of joint task force operations in the Horn of Africa.

He stressed that international cooperation was also the key to success in any military endeavor.

The international community can and must "assist so that standards of living can be improved, so people can live and raise their families in a secure environment, and that there is a future hope for the young people," he said.

"To do that, and especially to help the young people around the world, drives me every single day."

CH-47s delivers conexs to ANP stations

By Army Spc. Jason Krawczyk

20th Public Affairs Detachment

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Soldiers from Task Forces Eagle and Saber deliver conexs to Afghan National Police stations Aug. 30, 2005. A total of eight conexs were delivered to four stations. The conexs will be used as police sub-stations and will have air conditioning and other amenities.

"The conexs will be up and running in time for the elections and provide the ANP with more resources to provide security for the elections and after," said Capt. Eric Matthews, the Task Force Eagle Force Protection officer with the 111 Area Support Group.



An Army CH-47 carrying a future police sub-station flies by an Army HMMWV.



Above: Green smoke marks the drop zone as an Army CH-47 prepares to drop a conex. The conexs will be used as police sub-stations and will have air conditioning and other amenities.

Left: Army parachute rigger Sgt. Jamie Long guides an Army CH-47 as it prepares to drop a conex next to an Afghan National Police station.



Freedom Watch

September 12, 2005

**“The real and lasting victories
are those of peace, and not of
war.”**

Ralph Waldo Emerson